



MASKS OF THE GLOBAL NET.ART

CONTEXT AND CONTACTS

The advantage of having an avatar on the Internet is rapid efficacy at an universal scale. But the major interest remains the avatar's confidentiality. We can introduce ourselves exactly like we want to be seen. Another good point is that it's impossible to make links between different avatars, or even between the different ones we use, except if they are meant to be linked. Every avatar has its residence on a different server, with a different access address.

The identity manipulation has needed a lot more thinking ever since the rising of social networks such as blogs or websites like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. However, one cannot only consider these particular networks, as technology evolves very rapidly. Indeed, some of these websites might be viewed as obsolete in the short run.

First, the goal is to build a whole particular universe and a special personality by means of animations, image banks, a personal language and a graphic chart. Once this is done, it

has to be exposed to other users of the social network, which corresponds to the second part of the creative process because each manner of showing ourselves is clearly a «self-ad» that should seduce and create curiosity.

Hence, it's all about web creation before anything else. Because of that, the style of each social network and the kind of people who are attracted to it are very important for the development of the avatar, people around us playing influential and initiating roles.

At this stage, each avatar must be understood as a perfect unity in its personality construction, so that it can introduce itself in the action, as a kid grown-up enough to emancipate from his parents.

A spontaneous creative process will emerge, favorite subjects too. Now the avatar's personality has its own independence and goes on naturally after all this building labor.

But as the creation context influences the creation itself, the employed social network evidently induces the form of what it can contain and broadcast.

Therefore, the spirit of the community also has some influence on the creation process.

IDENTITY: AVATAR AND MODERN MASK

Internet is a way for people to create their own identities. They are various and can evolve easily. Moreover, they're not subjected to the offline world.

The avatar is built according to the network it is allied to, so there are different definitions of it, from pseudonym to some complex database describing the user with texts, images, descriptions, friends, tastes, artworks... Thanks to all the tools that the social network provides, people can express themselves and build themselves as characters.

During the 90's, net artists exploited the expressive possibilities of mailing lists in order to recognize themselves. For example, on the 7-11 mailing list, the net artist called m/e/t/a was signing each intervention with an enormous data collection like serial IP lists. At the time, these early communication tools represented a great media for net artists desiring to express their creativity. Users were also testing mailing lists' restraints:

ASCII images or kilometers of data in the parts reserved to the subject... These were the first experiments in terms of online identity affirmation.

During its early years, Internet was nicknamed «handshake» by net artists because of its friendly and social aspect. Values of communication and seduction are part of its essence. And of course, the avatar is the second more complex way of representing oneself, after the actual identity.

CONSEQUENCES AND LIMITS

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Our identity experiments can have many consequences in real life. Avatars represent the first step toward a strong relationship with a particular network. A collaboration could then be proposed at any time by the network user's contacts. As a result, a physical encounter would be unavoidable. We would introduce ourselves as N.I.E.I., spokesperson of our avatar. So we would be revealed, but our avatar could remain online, masks being only available on the Internet.

A FOREST IN THE SEED

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Each identity is a potential

way to make contacts and collaborations. It can be compared as a seed containing its genetic information but which remains ductile in its environment. Each seed can generate a whole forest. In this case, the permeability according to influences and contacts will be exponential.

IMPORTANCE OF THE MYTH

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In 2008, the N.I.E.I. studied how an identity can be perceived on the Internet. It was noticed that the part of mystery of the identity is very important and gives a lot more intensity to the discovery of an avatar. It appears that the intentionally hidden part of the latter enables its quality, as silence in music or blanks in texts.

Desire comes from the unknown, and from the need to get into the mystery to unmask it. This is the elementary seduction rule, and it has even more importance on the Internet as the medium has been created to help dissimulation and secrecy. Hence, discovering an avatar can become fruitless as the discoverer's curiosity is filled.

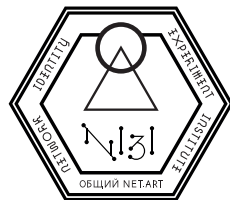
But if the avatar's author

shows only a small part of his creation, the interest will be increased and can even give birth to investigations or contact.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL UTOPIA OF INTERNET

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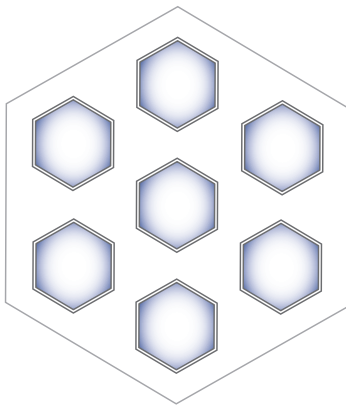
Mankind always referred itself to myth instead of confronting its own ignorance to unexplainable facts. The same attitude is adopted towards technology and Internet, which perfect control is impossible. The construction of a universal mythology according to the Internet culture would constitute one of the largest collaborative projects ever. With inspirations coming firstly from great human myths, secondly from social mechanics of free browsers and community knowledge (Wikipedia), it could become possible to create a modular and infinite fiction based on open source processes, with open source avatars.



*Extracted from SCHIZOLOGIES
Manifesto for a global net.art practice*

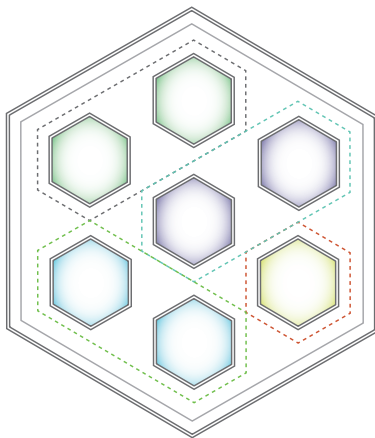


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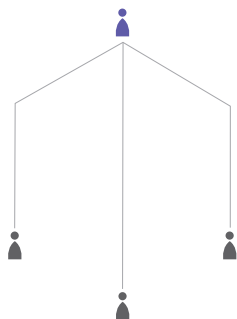


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artist



avatar



new contact
opportunity

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